

## **Teens and Pop Culture**

Ari Fulton  
Chicago Academy for the Arts, Chicago  
Teacher: Ray Yang

I feel that both teen behavior and popular culture have had a huge impact on each other. Popular culture reflects the trends going on in the teen community, however teens look to popular culture for inspiration. Teens have one of the largest consumer groups in America. Most teenagers are free from the burden of supporting a family and paying bills. This financial freedom leaves many to contribute greatly to the American economy. Companies spend millions of dollars a year on researching teen culture for the sole purpose of being one step ahead of their competitors. If a general trend seems to reoccur throughout the entire teen community, then pop culture will adopt it and make it their own. Twentieth century history identifies itself through the images illustrated in pop culture. Many of these images are of teen life. The first thing that comes to mind when studying historical periods is the opposition between youth and authority. Flappers are huge symbols of irony from the 1920's. Their rebellious attitude opposed everything their conservative predecessors stood for. This opposition continues and has become a mark throughout history. Though teenagers dictate what's popular to the larger society, they also borrow from popular culture. Whenever I find a trend that I like, I improve upon it and make it my own. I feel that this is true throughout the entire teen community. When I interviewed a woman about her teen life, I found that she had a connection to saddle shoes. At the time, saddle shoes were extremely popular. And while most teenage girls owned a pair they did not wear them the same way.